

REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated April 12, 2006.

Claims 10, 20, 30 and 33-53 are presented for examination, of which Claims 10, 20 and 30 are in independent form. Claims 10, 20 and 30 have been amended to define still more clearly what Applicants regard as their invention. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

Claims 10, 20, 30 and 33-53 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0140748 (Kanaya).

As shown above, Applicants have amended independent Claims 10, 20 and 30 in terms that more clearly define what they regard as their invention. Applicants submit that these amended independent claims, together with the remaining claims dependent thereon, are patentably distinct from the cited prior art for at least the following reasons.

Claim 10 is directed to an inventory management system that manages an inventory of an expendable. The system includes: (1) a first storage unit, adapted to store inventory information indicating an inventory number of an expendable which is mounted in a printer and can be replaced by a new one, the inventory number being subtracted based on replacement of the expendable in the printer; (2) a receiver unit, adapted to receive absence information indicating that the inventory number of the expendable is zero or less than a predetermined number; (3) an instruction unit, adapted to provide, to an external apparatus via a communication line, a delivery instruction for delivery of a new expendable to the printer; (4) a second storage unit, adapted to store history information indicating a history of the delivery instruction provided by the instruction unit; and (5) an alarm sending unit, adapted to send an alarm to the external apparatus via the communication line based on the history information

stored in the second storage unit and a new reception of the absence information received by the receiver unit, after the instruction unit provides the delivery instruction for delivery of the new expendable.

Support for the instruction unit that provides, to an external apparatus, a delivery instruction for delivery of a new expendable to the printer can be found at least in S3323 of Figs. 33A and 33B. Support for the alarm sending unit that sends an alarm to the external apparatus based on the history information and a new reception of the absence information, after the instruction unit provides the delivery instruction for delivery of the new expendable can be found at least in S3320 of Fig. 33B.

Among other notable features of Claim 10 are (1) a first storage unit, adapted to store inventory information indicating an inventory number of an expendable which is mounted in a printer and can be replaced by a new one, the inventory number being subtracted based on replacement of the expendable in the printer; (2) an instruction unit, adapted to provide, to an external apparatus via a communication line, a delivery instruction for delivery of a new expendable to the printer and (3) an alarm sending unit, adapted to send an alarm to the external apparatus via the communication line based on the history information stored in the second storage unit and a new reception of the absence information received by the receiver unit, after the instruction unit provides the delivery instruction for delivery of the new expendable.

By virtue of the structure recited in Claim 10, replenishing of the expendable at the printer where the inventory becomes depleted or low is expedited after the delivery instruction is provided.

Kanaya relates to a method of monitoring a residual quantity of ink remaining in

an ink reservoir. Kanaya discusses a printer having an ink jet head that ejects ink droplets and an ink reservoir that has a predetermined capacity to store ink. The ink jet head ejects ink droplets to create ink dots on a printing medium to print an image on an image medium. The printer also includes: (1) a supply condition detection unit that detects an ink supply condition, which affects a supply of ink to the ink jet head; (2) an ink ejecting number counter that counts an ink ejecting number ejected by the ink jet head; and (3) a residual ink quantity monitor that monitors a residual quantity of ink remaining in the ink reservoir by taking into account the ink supply condition detected by the supply condition detection unit, based on the ink ejecting number counted by the ink ejecting number counter and the predetermined capacity of the ink reservoir.

Kanaya discusses detecting the cumulative amount of ink ejection (S200 of Fig. 14, paragraph [0134]), producing an alarm based on the detected amount (paragraph [0032]) and displaying the residual quantity of ink (S200 of Fig. 14, Fig. 15). Kanaya further discusses monitoring the residual quantity of ink with high accuracy by taking into account a variation in ink supply condition (paragraph [0037], [0127]). However, nothing has been found in Kanaya that would teach or suggest “a first storage unit, adapted to store inventory information indicating an inventory number of an expendable which is mounted in a printer and can be replaced by a new one, the inventory number being subtracted based on replacement of the expendable in the printer,” “an instruction unit, adapted to provide, to an external apparatus via a communication line, a delivery instruction for delivery of a new expendable to the printer” or “an alarm sending unit, adapted to send an alarm to the external apparatus via the communication line based on the history information stored in said second storage unit and a new reception of the absence information received by said receiver unit, after said instruction unit provides the delivery

instruction for delivery of the new expendable," as recited in Claim 10.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that Claim 10 is allowable over Kanaya.

A review of the other art of record has failed to reveal anything which, in Applicants' opinion, would remedy the deficiencies of Kanaya discussed above, as a reference against Claim 10.

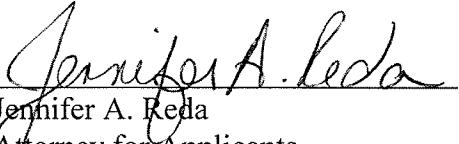
Independent Claims 20 and 30 are method and computer program claims, respectively, corresponding to apparatus Claim 10, and are believed to be patentable over Kanaya for at least the same reasons as discussed above in connection with Claim 10.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are, therefore, believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration or reconsideration, as the case may be, of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request early and favorable continued examination of the present application.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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